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## In Memoriam

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Rev. Francis Bickford Hornbrooke, D.D.

BY  
*George*  
REV. HENRY G. SPAULDING  
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READ AT THE MEETING OF THE TUESDAY CLUB  
NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS, DEC. 15, 1903

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BOSTON  
GEO. H. ELLIS CO., PRINTERS, 272 CONGRESS STREET  
1903

DESCRIPTION  
(1124)

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## IN MEMORIAM.

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**F** FRANCIS BICKFORD HORN BROOKE was born in Wheeling, W. Va., May 7, 1849. He was graduated at the University of Ohio in 1870, received the degree A.B. at that time, and in 1899 also from the same university the degree S.T.D. He was graduated from the Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1874. He had two periods of study afterward at the Harvard Divinity School, receiving on graduating the degree S.T.B. His first settlement was with the Trinitarian Congregational Church, East Hampton, Conn., Aug. 27, 1874, to Aug. 17, 1876. He was settled over the Unitarian Congregational Church in Weston, Mass., Oct. 18, 1876, to Sept. 26, 1879. He was then called to the Channing Religious Society, Newton, Mass., where he remained from Oct. 5, 1879, to July 1, 1900. He died in Newton, Dec. 5, 1903.

Dr. Hornbrooke joined the Tuesday Club Feb. 17, 1880. Only four of the present members of the Club have been in it for a longer time. In these twenty-four years he has read twenty-eight papers before the Club ; and one of the latest writings from his busy pen is an essay on "The Criticism of the Bible," which he had prepared to read at the Club meeting on Dec. 29, 1903. One of his early Tuesday Club papers, that on "Cardinal Newman," was published in the *Andover Review* of August, 1885. A paper originally prepared for the Boston Browning Society, of which he was at one time president, on "Sludge the Medium," was published in 1897 in the volume of that society's papers. Another of his numerous papers on the poems of Browning, that on the "Pope of 'The Ring and the Book,'" was published in *Poet Lore*. A tract which he wrote, "Christianity Permanent," appeared several years ago in the fourth series of tracts published by the American Unitarian Association. These four papers and his Channing Hall lecture on "Unitarianism and Modern Literature," given in 1889, which appeared later in the volume entitled "Unitarianism: Its Origin and History," are all his published writings of which I can find trace. That so gifted and so prolific a writer — one, too, who had

an exceptional mastery of literary style—should have published so little in the thirty years of his career as a preacher is surprising. He once told me that he intended to offer a volume of his sermons for publication; but the intention was not carried out. I think he regarded the main work of his life as that of the preacher. He labored well in other fields, took an active interest in education and was an efficient worker in behalf of the public schools and the public library in the city where he lived so long. From his wide reading in his favorite studies of history, theology, and general literature he drew the material for numerous papers and lectures which were read before clubs, societies, and parlor audiences. But these were the diversions of his busy life. When he was engaged in them, he put his whole soul into the immediate work; but these outside studies and pursuits he valued chiefly for the intellectual strength and moral insight which they furnished him,—a strength and an insight which he used to give breadth and depth to his preaching.

As a preacher, Dr. Hornbrooke was always clear and forcible. The truth which he unfolded and illustrated had fully possessed his own mind before he tried to make it the possession of other



minds. He preached his convictions. He believed, and therefore he spoke. And he gave his hearers the results rather than the processes of his thought. As his thinking had been logical and thorough, so the exposition was always straightforward, well reasoned, and well arranged. Such preaching is far removed from the sensationalism of much modern pulpit oratory. It is the mind-to-mind and heart-to-heart talk of a man who, having seen the light of truth and the beauty of holiness, would persuade his hearers to walk in this light, and to be enamoured of this holy beauty. It might be said of some of his sermons that they smacked more of books than of the world's common life. As a rule, however, when you heard him preach, you felt that, like the Master, he "knew what was in man," and spoke directly to his spiritual nature, appealing to the heart's instinctive faith in the Eternal Goodness and in the Infinite Power that makes for righteousness.

There are two ways of access to that knowledge of human nature, which every preacher must have if he would succeed. One way is by sympathetically entering into the common life; coming to know men by living much with them; "touching elbows" with one's fellow-men as he and they walk along the devious paths of life.

The other way is to look long and steadily into that mirror which poets, prophets, and seers — men of God-given genius — have held up to this wonderful nature of ours. For in that mirror we are shown not only what we are, but also what we were made to be. Our real humanity is pictured there, and our ideal humanity as well. Some of the books of the Bible and the inspired works of the great seers and sages in the world's best literature

“Teach us more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,”

than we gain from ordinary intercourse with common men. Those who knew our friend, whether as preacher or as writer, know well from which of these two sources came that knowledge of human nature and that reading of human destiny which made him the great teacher and inspiring guide that he was. It may not be necessary that a church or denomination have all of its preachers men of this sort; but the church which does not have a goodly number of preachers who are widely read, richly cultured, far-seeing and deep-seeing men, will lose its hold on the human mind, and will find many doors of access to the heart and the conscience closed against it.

Dr. Hornbrooke's message as a preacher it is not so easy to state, chiefly because, as has been said, so little that he wrote has appeared in print. He believed in the permanence of Christianity; for to him Christianity meant the influence of the life of Christ, and that influence, he affirmed, was unalterable and enduring. In his deepest thought, however, the life of Jesus was simply typical of man's truest and highest life. He could say with Whittier, —

“ We know in thee the fatherhood  
And heart of God revealed ” ;

but he would have added, This divine fatherhood, this love which is at the heart of the universe, is revealed through *all* holy and loving souls. The truth of the Incarnation, he held, is the indwelling of God in humanity. In his Channing Hall lecture Dr. Hornbrooke declared that his religious belief was “ rather a point of view than a definition ; less a tangible fact than an atmosphere which makes all things new.” But he does not hesitate to say that the faith which he loves teaches men that “ what is essential in religion does not depend upon the accidents of history.” With historical Christianity in some of its phases, even with the Cath-

olic faith of his revered Cardinal Newman, he had an intellectual sympathy; and he had also an unusually wide knowledge of the history of the Christian Church in all its theological developments. But for himself he went below all the records of religion, and built on the deep, everlasting foundations. "The revelation of God," he said, "is found in the course of nature and in the experiences of the soul of man. It is present, inward, universal."

This transcendental faith, or, if we choose so to call it, this mysticism, was the basis of his religious teaching as it was the support of his own soul. With such a faith he could not be a dogmatist nor even the advocate and partisan of a sect. With strong personal convictions, he yet had the judicial mind. In closing his brilliant essay on Cardinal Newman, he said, "If I am not altogether one-sided in my mental conceptions and moral views, if I have not been unduly warped by the time-spirit, I owe it to the teachings of Newman." It is interesting to read in this connection what Dr. Hornbrooke said of the great hymn by Newman, "Lead, Kindly Light," which was sung at his funeral: "This hymn," he wrote, "will forever remain the most perfect expression of religious natures." It may be that at times he

had cried out from the depths of his own experience,—

“O’er moor and fen, o’er crag and torrent,  
Lead Thou me on.”

In the same essay is a quotation from another and less familiar hymn by Newman. How pathetic are some of its lines in view of the latest years of our friend’s earthly life!

“O comrade” (the poet is addressing Saint Paul in prison),

“O comrade bold — of toil and pain  
Thy trial how severe!  
When severed first by prisoner’s chain  
From thy loved labor-sphere.”

In turning from this essay of his, we may sum up what to many of us Dr. Hornbrooke was as a preacher by quoting what he said of Newman: “He not only gave us light, he made us feel what is sacred.”

We could wish that over this dear friend’s life no cloud had ever come, no shadow fallen to dim its lustre and obscure the glory of his achievements. This cloud first appeared in the morning of his youth; this shadow fell before the sun of his life had reached the meridian. It hung over

his professional career for nearly a quarter of a century. Three years ago the shadow began to melt into light; and during the last period of our friend's life there were no clouds to gather round its setting sun. He fell at the last like a soldier who, marching home from a great victory, is suddenly killed by a bullet from an unseen foe.

For us to-day all remembrance of cloud and shadow is swallowed up in the brightness of that sublime moral heroism, that Christian fortitude, that martyr-like patience which marked his latest years. It is not that with a patient heart he bore his sufferings,—and few men ever suffer more than those who, with exceptional gifts and well-trained powers, find the doors of opportunity closed and the pathways to future achievements blocked up against them,—it is not his brave endurance of the inward pain that earned for him the crown. It is because, animated by a lofty faith, he fought courageously the hard, and, for the most part, the single-handed, fight for freedom and for manhood, and stood at length, as in Guido's painting, the great archangel stands, his foot immovably fixed on the conquered dragon's head:—it is for this that we say, "Thanks be to God who gave him the victory"; and to our

thanks we add our meed of praise: *Soldier of Christ, well done!*

Very pleasant should be the thought to us, his fellow-members in this Club, that in some measure we were the helpers of his faith and of his joy in the days that tried him so sorely. Our sheltering arms were thrown around him; and this gave him more confidence that he had the unfailing support of the Almighty Arm. Here he found loyal hearts and true, brothers whose unaltered and unalterable friendship made our meetings to him as refreshing hill-tops near by the dusty road, whence he came back to do out the duty with fresh hope and added courage.

Of what Dr. Hornbrooke has been to the Tuesday Club I shall let our beloved secretary speak. The Rev. Dr. G. W. Shinn writes:—

“From the very beginning of his membership he was recognized as a man whose intellectual qualities were of a superior order and whose social qualities would draw others to him. Then we have seen him grow stronger in the traits which he so sedulously cultivated, until, when a paper of his was announced or when he was called upon to speak, we expected to find edification. While his contributions to the Club were so cheerfully made, we perhaps did not always realize at the

time how rich they were ; but, in recalling them later on, we were amazed at the breadth and depth of his learning and at the gracefulness and accuracy of his scholarship.

“ He was an omnivorous reader, and absorbed much. He had a strong memory, and retained much. He wielded a facile pen, and attained a literary style that enabled him to put his thoughts into interesting shape. We cannot soon forget his readiness to present a paper to the Club at almost any time in an emergency, so that for years he was the one man who could be called upon to take the place of an absentee or to fill a gap, that the Club might not lose the usual stimulus to discussion. We recall his perpetual readiness in debate, no subject seeming to be outside the realm of his interests ; and, whenever he spoke, we felt that he had added something to a better understanding of the topic under consideration, even when some of us might feel impelled to take a different view of the question. Added to his fine intellectual gifts there was a kindly, sympathetic nature which inspired friendship. He impressed us with the feeling that he was brotherly and warm-hearted.”

Yes, Dr. Hornbrooke was our dear, warm-hearted, large-minded, high-thinking, brave-



souled *brother*. We will not say Farewell. For him it must be well wherever he may fare. Our Good-bye shall be given in a phrase we borrow from another tongue,—those words that tell the heart's deep longing : —

AUF WIEDERSEH'N !

Again to see thee ; *this*, our fervent prayer ;  
To be with thee in Life's diviner air ;  
All sorrows vanished, overcome all pain,  
To greet thee by and by : *Auf Wiederseh'n !*



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